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ABSTRACT

Studies tested the hypothesis that patterns in parents' perceptions of their children's behavior toward them will correlate significantly with patterns in parents' reports of their children's personality attributes and psychopathology. A low-income (LI) sample was drawn from participants in a longitudinal study of mother-child interaction and child development that began during mothers' pregnancy. Data were collected from 211 mothers interviewed three years after their children began kindergarten. Mean age of the sample was 29.9 years; mean educational level was 11.5 years; and mean annual income was 6,500 dollars. A parallel cross-sectional study conducted during children's kindergarten year included interviews with 200 mothers of singleton, low-birth-weight (LBW) children born during a 2-year period. Mothers' perceptions of their children were obtained with the Parent Report of Child Behavior toward the Parent Inventory's (CBTP) scales for instrumental independence, positive involvement, compliance/obedience, resisting/controlling behavior, and detachment/distance in interaction with the mother. Mothers' perceptions of their children's personalities and psychopathologies were obtained with the Child Adaptive Behavior Inventory's scales for competence, altruism, antisocial/hostile behavior, hyperactivity, somatic complaints, and depression for the LBW sample, with added scales for apathy and asocial behavior for the LI sample. Results are discussed. The short form of the CBTP is appended. (Author/RH)

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Mother-Child Relationship Correlates Of Mothers' Reports Of Child Behavior

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Mother-Child Relationship Correlates

Sullivan's (1953) definition of personality as ". . . the relatively enduring pattern of recurrent interpersonal situations. . ." and ". . . as the hypothetical entity which we posit to account for interpersonal relations" (p. xi) suggests that a mother's perceptions of a child's relationship with herself might be significantly correlated with her perception of the child's personality and psychopathology. The mother's inferences concerning the child's personality may be primarily determined by recurrent patterns of mother-child interaction. Perhaps stable patterns of coercive family processes (Patterson, 1982) are partially maintained by the participant's perceptions of the other's behavior toward themselves and by correlated perceptions of the other's personality.

Attribution theory that ". . . involves the attempt to explain how ordinary people explain behavior by making attributions" (Buss, 1978, p. 1311) provides a rationale for this study of parent-child relationships and child personality. The Dix and Grusec (1985) review of "attribution biases" that may effect parent perceptions of children emphasized ". . . the fundamental attribution error . . . the tendency to attribute behavior to traits or dispositions while underestimating the importance of situational constraints" (p. 212). They discussed

the effects upon parental attributions of a self-serving bias ". . . a tendency to perceive events in ways that protect or enhance their self esteem" (p. 213), of hedonic relevance--the negative or positive consequences of behavior, and of personalism --the parent's interpretation of child behavior as intended to affect the parent. Dix's and Grusec's discussion may be even more relevant for research on parent attributions for behavior of their own children than for research on parental attributions for behavior of fictitious children.

There are few studies of parent reports of child behavior toward the parent as contrasted to the many studies of child reports of parent behavior toward the child (Goldin, 1969; Schaefer, 1965). The less studied area suggests a different focus in research on perceptions of the more powerful and of the less powerful person in an asymmetrical, complementary parent-child relationship. This asymmetry probably also explains the lack of studies on child evaluations of parent personality as contrasted to the many studies of parent evaluations of child personality. The lack of studies of parent perceptions of child behavior toward the parent may reflect a tendency of parents to attribute child behavior toward parent to generalized, stable child dispositions or personality traits.

The asymmetrical nature of parent-child relationships has required development of different concepts for research on parent reports of child behavior toward parent (Schaefer & Finkelstein, 1975) than for research on child reports of parent behavior toward

the child (Schaefer, 1965). The factor analysis of parent reports of child behavior toward parent identified major dimensions of child resisting control versus compliant/obedient behavior; child positive involvement versus detachment from parent; and independence versus dependence. The many researches on parent ratings of child psychopathology have identified major dimensions of externalization and internalization of conflict (Achenbach, 1966). Studies that have included ratings of competence and adaptive behavior have also identified a dimension of child competence (Schaefer, 1981). This research tests an hypothesis that patterns of parent perceptions of child behavior toward parent will be significantly correlated with patterns of parent report of child personality and psychopathology.

Method

Samples

The low-income (LI) sample for this study consisted of participants in a longitudinal study of mother-child interaction and child development that began during the mother's pregnancy. The data for this analysis were collected from 211 mothers who were interviewed three years after their child's kindergarten entrance. Mean age of the sample was 29.9 years, mean educational level was 11.5 years, and mean annual income was reported as $6500.

A parallel cross-sectional study during the child's kindergarten year included interviews with 200 mothers of

singleton, low-birth-weight (LBW) children born in a target county during a two-year period. The children who weighed less than 2500 grams at birth were identified from a state birth register and were located from kindergarten enrollments in the community.

Data Collection Methods

During an interview in her home, the mother's perception of the child was obtained with the Parent Report of Child Behavior toward the Parent Inventory (Schaefer, Finkelstein, & Edgerton, 1977) that is reproduced in the Appendix. The method includes five-item scales for Instrumental Independence, Positive Involement, Compliance/Obedience, Resisting/Controlling, and Detachment/Distance in interaction with the mother. The mother's perception of the child's personality and psychopathology was collected with the Child Adaptive Behavior Inventory (Schaefer, Hunter, & Edgerton, 1984) that included five-to-eight item scales for Competence, Altruism, Antisocial/Hostile, Hyperactivity, Somatic Complaints, and Depression for the LBW sample; with added scales for Apathy and Asocial for the LI sample.

Data Analyses

Intercorrelations were computed among scales of each of the two domains of mother's report of child behavior toward herself and report of child personality and psychopathology to explore patterns and clusters within each domain. Scales for the two domains were then intercorrelated to test the hypothesis of

significant correlations across domains. In order to obtain a more detailed analysis of relationships between the two domains, each of the child behavior toward the parent scales were correlated with each of the child adaptive behavior items. LISREL VI (Joreskog & Sorbom, 1984) confirmatory factor analyses were computed in order to estimate correlations between child behavior toward parent and child adaptive behavior scales corrected for attentuation. Independent analyses for the LI and LBW samples allowed replication of the findings.

Results

The intercorrelations among the Parent Report of Child Behavior toward the Parent scales that are reported in Table 1 for both the LI and LBW samples show significant correlations between Instrumental Independence and Positive Involement and between Positive Involvement and Compliance/Obedience. Compliance/ Obedience also has a substantial negative correlation with Resisting Control/Controlling Parent. Detachment/Distance has relatively low correlations with other scales for both samples.

(Insert Table 1 about here)

Intercorrelations of the Child Adaptive Behavior Inventory scales are also similar for the two samples (Table 2).

Substantial correlations were obtained between Antisocial/Hostile and Hyperactive for both samples and among Depression, Apathy, and Asocial for the LI sample. Competence was also substantially correlated with Altruism which had negative correlations with Antisocial/Hostile.

(Insert Table 2 about here)

The correlations between the domains of mother's report of child behavior toward herself and reports of child adaptive behavior are reported in Tables 3 and 4. The order of neighboring among scales determined by intercorrelations within each domain contributes to the clear patterns of intercorrelations between the domains. Correlations are approximately as high between the two domains as for intercorrelations of scales within each domain. Mothers' reports of child instrumental independence are substantially correlated with reports of child competence. Reports of child positive involement are correlated with both child competence and altruism. Reports of child compliance/ obedience are correlated positively with child altruism and negatively with antisocial/hostile and hyperactive behavior. Reports of child resisting/controlling parent are correlated with antisocial/hostile and hyperactive for both samples. Child distancing and detaching self from mother is most clearly

correlated with apathy and asocial for the LI sample.

(Insert Tables 3 AND 4 about here)

Correlations of each of the child behavior toward the parent scales with child adaptive behavior items reported in Tables 5 and 6 reveal different clusters of child behavior for each of the child behavior toward parent scales. Specific items of the child behavior toward parent scales that are identified in the Appendix describe behaviors toward parent that are similar to the child's generalized adaptive behavior. Instrumental Independence is correlated with child competence; Positive Involvement with extraverted, positive sociability; Obedience/Compliance with cooperativeness; Resisting Control/Controlling Parent with hostility and hyperactivity; and Detachment/Distance with apathetic, asocial, depressed behavior. Independent analyses of the two samples clearly replicate the patterns of relationships between the two domains.

(Insert Tables 5 and 6 about here)

Confirmatory factor analyses utilizing LISREL VI (Joreskog & Sorbom, 1984) that estimated correlations of child behavior toward

parent with child adaptive behavior are reported in Table 7 separately for the LI and LBW samples. Very high correlations were found of components of child instrumental independence with components of child competence (rs = .98 and .84) and between a factor defined by mothers' reports of child compliance/obedience and resisting control/controlling parent and a factor of antisocial/hostile and hyperactive behavior (rs = .94 and .89). Components of positive involvement are also highly significantly correlated with components of altruism (= .65 and .82). For the LI sample child detachment and distancing self from parent is highly correlated with apathy and asocial behavior (r = .84). The correlation was not computed for the LBW sample for whom relevant data were not collected. High correlations between child behavior toward parent and child adaptive behavior scales after correction for attentuation caused by limitations in measurement suggests that mother's perception of child's relationship to self is not differentiated from mother's perception of child personality.

(Insert Table 7 about here)

Discussion

The one-to-one correspondence between mother's perception of child's resistance to control and of the child's antisocial, hostile, hyperactive behavior support a hypothesis that parent

attributions may contribute to stabilization of a coercive family process (Patterson, 1982). Similarly, correlations between mother's report of child positive involvement and child altruism may indicate a positive family process that contributes to child socialization. The correlations between mother's perception of the child's detachment and distancing from herself and her perceptions of child apathy and asocial behavior may suggest a process of mutual disengagement. Apparently specific family processes are associated with special patterns of child behavior as perceived by the mother.

These patterns of mother's perception of the child's relationship to self and the child's personality/psychopathology are similar to Horney's (1946) identification of the compliant personality who tends to move toward others, the aggressive type who tends to move against others, and the detached type who tends to move away from others. A competent child who moves toward instrumental independence and a cooperative child who moves with others to achieve mutual goals have also been identified in this analysis. Although Horney stressed the neurotic component of each of these types, the mother appears to stress positive components of the child's movement toward herself and in cooperation with herself and the child's movement toward instrumental independence while stresssing negative components of moving against and moving away from herself. The very high correlations between the mother's report of the child's relationship with herself and report of the child's personality supports Sullivan's (1953)

interpretation of personality as ". . . the hypothetical entity we posit to account for interpersonal relations."

Bell (1986) has interpreted correlations between parent-child relationships and child behavior as evidence that child behavior influences parent behavior. Rowe's (1981, 1983) findings of genetic components of child perception of parent acceptance versus rejection also suggests that child temperament may influence parent-child relationships. Relatively low but significant correlations between ratings of child behavior by parents and teachers suggest that parent descriptions are partially related to generalized child behaviors (Quay, 1979).

Other research has found parent personality correlates of parent reports of child temperament (Bates, 1983). Studies of clinic-referred children have found that a mother's perception of child adjustment is correlated with the mother's personality and adjustment (Rogers & Forehand, 1983). A longitudinal study found that mother's personality during pregnancy and infancy is significantly correlated with her reports of child behavior during kindergarten (Schaefer, Hunter, & Edgerton, in press). Thus, previous research has found both child personality and parent personality correlates of parent reports of child behavior. Yet this research suggests that patterns of mother's report of the parent-child relationship have much higher correlations and almost a one-to-one correspondence with patterns of mother's reports of child adaptive behavior.

The findings of this study are relevant to an observation of

Jones and Nisbett (1972) that "There is a pervasive tendency for actors to attribute their actions to situational requirements, whereas observers tend to attribute the same activities to stable dispositions" (p. 80). Jones and DeCharms (1957) also state "the more relevant an act is for the perceiver, the stronger will be the correspondence between act, intention, and disposition" (p. 6). Furthermore, Fincham (1983) observed ". . . in close relationships causal attributions. . . are part of the fabric of the relationship, altering and being altered by its course" (p. 20).

Experimental research on interaction of strangers has revealed that ". . . stereotypes can and do channel dyadic interaction so as to create their own social reality" (Snyder, Tanke, & Berscheid, 1977, p. 663). Research on the behavioral confirmation process was extended by a Snyder and Swann (1978) study of confirmatory-hypothesis-testing strategies in interpersonal interaction. They concluded that "To the extent that individuals chronically formulate and enact confirmatory strategies for assessing the accuracy of their hypotheses and beliefs about other people, they may create for themselves a world in which hypotheses and beliefs become self-perpetuating beliefs . . ." (p. 1211). Orvis, Kelly, and Butler's (1976) conclusion that ". . . the attributions of each person in an intimate dyad often serve to blame the other and exonerate one's self" (p. 216) suggests that blaming the personality of the other for a negative relationship may maintain the self-esteem of the observer. Each

of these characteristics of the attribution process might contribute to generalization of a relationship to stable personality traits of the other while the contribution of the observer to the relationship is neglected.

Changes in child behavior that followed directions to parents to count their attention to appropriate behavior (Baer, Rowbury, Baer, Herbert, Clark, & Nelson, 1976) supports a view that behavioral confirmation processes contribute to stabilization of child behavior patterns. Redirecting parent attention to positive parent-child interactions and positive child behavior may reduce negative confirmatory-hypothesis-testing strategies (Snyder & Swann, 1978) and behavioral confirmation processes (Snyder, Tanke, and Berscheid, 1977) that contribute to stabilization of negative attributions, negative parent-child relationships, and negative behavior of the child.

The concepts and the method used here to study parent's perceptions of child behavior toward the parent complement the concepts and methods of research on child perceptions of parent behavior. The clear findings with a brief version of the Child Behavior toward Parent Inventory suggests that more detailed research would be fruitful, perhaps with the initial 31-scale, 155-item version of the inventory (Schaefer & Finkelstein, 1975). Further identification of types of interpersonal behavior that were proposed by Horney (1946) and replicated and extended by this analysis is needed. Correlations of types of interpersonal relationships with types of personality would contribute to the

development and integration of a psychology of relationships and a psychology of personality.

Investigation of parent's perceptions of the parent-child relationship might complement parent reports of child personality and psychopathology in clinical studies. This study suggests the need to conceptualize positive interpersonal behaviors and positive personality traits to complement the traditional emphasis on psychopathology. An attribution process interpretation of correlations between parent reports of child behavior toward the parent and parent reports of child adaptive behavior might explain the effectiveness of a redirection of parental attention intervention. The review of research on attribution processes in marital relationships by Fincham (1983) suggests that similar research on parent-child relationships would contribute to understanding of adaptive and maladaptive family processes and to clinical application.

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Child Behavior Toward Parent
Short Form
Earl S. Schaefer, Neal Finkelstein, and Marianna Edgerton

Each of the following statements might describe your child. Please circle the number that indicates how well each statement describes your child's behavior with you.

		Not at All Like	Very Little Like	Some-what Like	Very Much Like
1.	Works hard to please me.	1	2	3	4
2.	Keeps after me for things even after I say no.	1	2	3	4
3.	Tries to do things for him/herself.	1	2	3	4
4.	Does what I ask.	1	2	3	4
5.	Doesn't talk to me much.	1	2	3	4
6.	Often asks to do things with me.	1	2	3	4
7.	Gives me a hard time if I don't respond to him/her immediately.	1	2	3	4
8.	Works or plays without asking me for help.	1	2	3	4
9.	Is easy to manage.	1	2	3	4
10.	Doesn't show much interest in me.	1	2	3	4
11.	Is anxious to please me after he/she has made me angry.	1	2	3	4
12.	Is hard to get along with when I don't agree with him/her.	1	2	3	4
13.	Keeps busy for long periods of time without my attention.	1	2	3	4
14.	Obeys my rules.	1	2	3	4
15.	Pulls away when I give him/her special attention.	1	2	3	4
16.	Does things to cheer me up when I've had a bad day.	1	2	3	4
17.	Won't take no for an answer when he/she wants something.	1	2	3	4
18.	Likes to go ahead with things he/she can do on his/her own.	1	2	3	4
19.	Tries to keep quiet when I ask him/her to.	1	2	3	4
20.	Resists my attempts to be warm and friendly.	1	2	3	4
21.	Tries to be helpful when I'm busy.	1	2	3	4
22.	Seldom obeys me unless I keep after him/her.	1	2	3	4
23.	Tries to figure things out for him/herself before he/she asks questions.				
24.	Goes along with my suggestions willingly.	1	2	3	4
25.	Doesn't share any activities with me.	1	2	3	4

NOTE: Scales are formed by summing items as follows:

Scales	Items
Positive Involvement	1, 6, 11, 16, 21
Resisting Control/Controlling	2, 7, 12, 17, 22
Instrumental Independence	3, 8, 13, 18, 23
Compliance/Obedience	4, 9, 14, 19, 24
Detachment/Distancing	5,10, 15, 20, 25

Table 1
Intercorrelations of Mother's Reports of Child Behavior Toward Mother Scale
(Low birth-weight sample [N=200] in lower diagonal,
Low income sample [N=211] in upper diagonal)*

	Instrumental Independence	Positive Involvement	Compliance/ Obedience	Resisting/ Controlling	Detachment/ Distance
Instrumental Independence	--	.41	.28	-.14	-.14
Positive Involvement	.45	--	.44	-.24	-.31
Compliance/ Obedience	.31	.47	--	-.54	-.13
Resisting/ Controlling	.03	.09	-.47	--	.17
Detachment/ Distance	-.10	-.24	-.17	.12	--

*NOTE: Correlations $\geq$ .18, $p < .01$

Table 2
Intercorrelations of Mother's Reports of Child Adaptive Behavior Scales
(Low Birth-weight sample [N=200] in lower diagonal,
Low income sample [N=211] in upper diagonal)*

	Competence	Altruism	Antisocial/ Hostility	Hyper-activity	Somatic Complaints	Depression	Apathy	Asocial
Competence	--	.37	-.18	-.31	-.16	-.20	-.35	-.23
Altruism	.59	--	-.48	-.36	-.25	-.11	-.25	-.39
Antisocial/ Hostility	-.29	-.51	--	.59	.47	.31	.38	.45
Hyperactivity	-.38	-.53	.64	--	.46	.26	.36	.28
Somatic Complaints	-.20	-.29	.53	.46	--	.41	.39	.34
Depression	-.31	-.36	.38	.36	.57	--	.56	.54
Apathy	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	.66
Asocial	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--

*NOTE: Correlations $\geq$ .18, $p < .01$

Table 3
Correlations of Child Adaptive Behavior with Child Behavior toward Mother for Low Income Sample (N=211)*

Child Adaptive Behavior	Child Behavior toward Parent: Instrumental Independence	Positive Involvement	Compliance/ Obedience	Resisting/ Controlling	Detachment/ Distance
Competence	.60	.48	.23	-.14	-.24
Altruism	.37	.47	.55	-.30	-.20
Antisocial/ Hostility	-.16	-.26	-.45	.49	.29
Hyperactivity	-.25	-.29	-.49	.59	.15
Somatic Complaints	-.20	-.23	-.29	.49	.17
Depression	-.13	-.14	-.12	.27	.32
Apathy	-.25	-.31	-.23	.34	.46
Asocial	-.11	-.30	-.26	.28	.52

*NOTE: Correlations $\geq$ .18, $p < .01$

Table 4
Correlations of Child Adaptive Behavior with Child Behavior toward Mother for Low Birth-weight Sample (N=200)*

	Child Behavior toward Parent				
Child Adaptive Behavior	Instrumental Independence	Positive Involvement	Obedience/ Compliance	Resisting/ Controlling	Detachment/ Distance
Competence	.56	.49	.37	-.05	-.22
Altruism	.43	.59	.68	-.27	-.31
Antisocial/ Hostility	-.26	-.27	-.56	.53	.23
Hyperactivity	-.15	-.18	-.53	.46	.23
Somatic Complaints	-.10	-.09	-.21	.34	.24
Depression	-.26	-.16	-.23	.21	.33

*NOTE: Correlations $\geq$ .18, $p < .01$

Table 5
Behavior Items with Highest Correlations with Child Behavior toward Parent Scales for Low Income Sample

Child Behavior toward Parent Scale	Adaptive Behavior Item	Correlation*
Instrumental Independence	Works carefully and does his/her best	.46
	Is smart for his/her age	.43
	Has good ideas about how to do things	.43
	Thinks up interesting things to do	.41
	Catches on quickly	.39
Positive Involvement	Is concerned about the feelings of others	.46
	Is sympathetic to other's hurts	.37
	Can express ideas clearly	.39
	Likes to meet new people	.35
	Is friendly to adults	.32
Obedience/ Compliance	Tried not to do or say anything that would hurt another	.49
	Always plays fair with other children	.42
	Is willing to wait his/her turn	.40
	Is kind to younger children	.34
Resists Control/ Controlling	Has a hard time waiting	.56
	Is noisy and loud, never stops talking	.51
	Is stubborn and irritable	.46
	Is restless, can't sit still	.41
	Says he/she is sick when doesn't want to do something	.41
	Comes running to me with every little bump or scratch	.41
	Often complains about not feeling well	.34
	Sometimes breaks or ruins things	.33
	Doesn't always tell the truth	.33
Detachment/Distancing	Doesn't seem very interested in things	.48
	Doesn't care much about anything	.48
	Seems distant even when with someone	.45
	Doesn't smile or laugh much	.39
	Doesn't respond when other children are friendly	.38
	Seems unhappy and depressed	.37
	Doesn't seem close to anyone	.37

*NOTE: All correlations are significant beyond the .0001 level.

Table 6
Behavior Items with Highest Correlations with Child Behavior toward Parent Scales for Low Birth-weight Sample

Child Behavior toward Parent Scale	Adaptive Behavior Item	Correlation*
Instrumental Independence	Works carefully and does his/her best	.43
	Has good ideas about how to do things or make things	.38
	Catches on quickly, e.g., is quick at learning new games	.37
	Is smart for his/her age	.35
	Likes to explore & investigate things	.31
Positive Involvement	Is concerned about the feelings of others	.56
	Thinks up interesting things to do	.46
	Is sympathetic to other's hurts	.43
	Is kind to younger children	.42
	Likes to meet new people	.38
Obedience/ Compliance	Can be depended on to do what he/she is supposed to do	.55
	Is calm and easy going	.52
	Is willing to wait his/her turn	.52
	Always plays fair with other children	.45
	Tries not to do or say anything that would hurt another	.45
	Listens well when someone explains something	.43
	Often works quietly at an activity for a long time	.43
Resists Control/ Controlling	Is stubborn and irritable	.47
	Has a hard time waiting when he/she wants something	.46
	Likes to disobey or break rules	.42
	Has a hot temper	.42
	Is noisy and loud, never stops talking	.39
	Is always getting into things	.37
Detachment/Distance	Doesn't seem very interested in things	.43
	Seems unhappy or depressed	.39
	Often sits around doing nothing	.30
	Often seems lonely	.25

*NOTE: All correlations are significant beyond the .001 level.

Table 7
LISREL Estimates of Correlations of Child Behavior toward Parent with Child Adaptive Behavior

Child Behavior toward Parent	Child Adaptive Behavior	LISREL Estimates of Correlation	
		Low Income Sample	Low Birth-weight Sample
Instrumental Independence	Competence	.98	.84
Positive Involvement	Altruism	.65	.82
Resisting Control/Controlling versus Obedience/Compliance	Antisocial Hostility and Hyperactivity	.94	.89
Detachment/Distancing	Apathy, Asocial	.84	--[a]

[a]Relevant data were not collected.